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# IN CONVERSATION: CAPTURING REFLECTION BETWEEN POETRY AND FILMMAKING PRACTICE

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## Abstract:

This article discusses the use of a filmed conversation as a medium of reflection on creative practice, in particular the practice of making filmpoems. We consider in what sense the filmed conversation might be a rigorous and productive mode of reflection, and describe the process of producing the film, as well as analyzing the mode's effectiveness as a way of reflecting on practice. This analysis is presented as a case study of a non-conventional medium of reflection and of its relation to the more conventional scholarly article. We argue that the reflection recorded in the film is distorted by production and editorial processes, but that nevertheless it provides a useful and distinctive form of reflection to augment conventional accounts. By exploring how reflection on practice is shaped by the medium of publication, this article contributes to advancing the discipline of Creative Writing and making its reflective element more productive.

**Keywords:** reflection, filmpoem, practice research

## Biographical note:

Tony Williams is Associate Professor in Creative Writing at Northumbria University. His novel *Nutcase* adapts *The Saga of Grettir the Strong* into a contemporary setting. *All the Bananas I've Never Eaten* won best short story collection in the Saboteur Awards, while his poetry has been shortlisted for the Aldeburgh, Portico and Michael Murphy prizes, and has been a PBS Pamphlet Choice. He also works in collaboration with the film-maker Alan Fentiman.

Alan Fentiman is a filmmaker who specialises in documenting the creative process. Based in The North East of England, he works with artists, writers, makers, musicians and academics with a particular interest in collaboration and interdisciplinary research. His films have been shown on the BBC, Channel 4, the Discovery Channel and at cinemas, festivals and exhibition spaces across the UK.

## Introduction

This paper reflects on the process of producing 'Terra Incognita: Mapping the Filmpoem.'  
[\[https://vimeo.com/127694674\]](https://vimeo.com/127694674)

I (Tony Williams) am a writer-researcher working across a range of forms; I occasionally collaborate with the filmmaker Alan Fentiman. Alan's specialism is documenting artists and

their practices, and we first worked together when he made a documentary film about my research into writing and dog-walking (Fentiman & Williams 2013a). The documentary concluded with a creative piece, the film-poem, ‘So tell me, who are they, these travellers?’ (Fentiman & Williams 2013b). Following that initial collaboration, we continued to work together, sometimes formally but more often informally through a series of conversations, mainly had in the pub, about the film-poem, what it was and how it could or should be made. That meeting point was really a focus for a much wider conversation about our two practices, of film-making and writing, and the similarities and differences between them. I certainly believed that understanding the techniques of film – both on-screen effects and the technical processes and approaches which produce those effects – shed a new light on my own practice as a poet. Even if how I went about my writing didn’t always change as a result, having another practical context to set it against helped me to understand better what I was doing, and how, in particular, techniques and assumptions that I might have thought were universal were actually shaped by such factors as the tradition, cultural positioning, and technology of the artform I was working in.

So far so good, and we weren’t looking to write up these conversations for publication, even if they did seem tremendously useful in helping me to think about writing. (And needless to say, we weren’t sitting in the Tanners Arms providing bibliographic details for the films and poems we mentioned.) Having another practice to talk towards (or against, or about, or through) felt like a mode of reflection which gave leverage on my own practice. The act of conversation, and dialogic format, helped me to think about my writing in a different way from the more solitary kind of critical reflection which creative writers more usually engage in for publication. Talking to another practitioner was one way of achieving creative serendipity, by creating ‘the confluence of cognitive activity and external stimulation that most often leads to so-called “eureka moments” for creators’ (Skains 2018: 90). But the

conversational format, although it enabled new insights, also appeared to be a limiting factor: these were just conversations in the pub, and so it never occurred to us to document or disseminate them.

Then we were invited to speak about filmpoetry at a conference organised by the Literary & Visual Landscapes group at Bristol University. Our title, 'Terra Incognita: Mapping the Filmpoem', was intended to express our aim in the paper, to map our own fledgling practice as filmpoem practitioners. The filmpoem has a long international tradition, dating back as a term at least to the postwar American avant-garde film (Peterson 1994: 10), and, as a mode, to the 1920s. In its early usage the term referred to certain features of a film practice related by analogy to poetry (Peterson 1994: 29); key practitioners range from French Impressionists such as Jean Epstein, Germaine Dulac and Dimitri Kirsanoff and the Dadaist Hans Richter to American avant-gardists such as Stan Brakhage and Bruce Baillie. While such filmmakers might draw on the *idea* of poetry in conceiving their practice, at least as early as 1928 with Man Ray's *L'Etoile De Mer* based on a poem by Robert Desnos (Ieropoulos 2010: 27), the filmpoem begins to emerge in its more specific sense of a work which brings together both film and poetry in some more concrete way. (Williams Wees differentiates this version of the filmpoem by referring to it as the 'poetry-film' (quoted in Ieropoulos 2010: 28-9), but we follow more recent usage in sticking to 'filmpoem', in spite of the possible confusions.) This more specific tradition is the one which interested us, particularly during a contemporary moment in which technological advances have made the filmpoem accessible both to audiences via YouTube, Vimeo and specialist websites such as [movingpoems.com](http://movingpoems.com), and to practitioners via smartphones and other cheap digital technology. Today the form has its own critics (e.g. Robert Speranza, William Wees), editors and curators (Peter Todd, Thomas Zandegiacomo Del Bel, Dave Bonta), and practitioners (Tony Harrison, Kate Sweeney, Tom Speers, Anna Eijsbouts).

However, as practitioners rather than critics of the film-poem, we were not equipped to provide a detailed survey of the form. Instead we could bring expertise in the two parent practices of film-making and poetry-writing, and the generative conversation that happened between those two practices when we brought them together. Even then, our aim was not to situate our own practice critically in relation to the film-poem tradition and its attendant literature, but to reflect on the ways in which our own practice might map a route through the tensions and opportunities of the living form.

It was clear that the medium of our conference contribution was important. We knew we did not want to write and deliver a standard 18-minute paper. Whatever authority we had, the knowledge we were being asked to speak on the basis of, was entirely practical. It was not grounded in detailed critical work, and it seemed pointless to suggest that it was. Instead, we decided to present them in their original form: as conversations in the pub, filmed for posterity. Our idea was that this would be a documentary record of our reflections as they came about, and thus provide a more detailed and accurate account of *how* practitioners (sometimes) reflect on practice. In this article I will describe how we went about making the film, how far it achieved that aim, what it had to sacrifice in order to do so, and how the process of filming a conversation compares to the more conventional process of writing a critical-reflective essay.

### **Beyond the scholarly article**

This article contributes to a much wider conversation not only in Creative Writing but across the creative practice disciplines, about the purpose and content of supplementary discourses which accompany, articulate, and legitimize creative practice and its artefacts. That conversation (e.g. Perry 1998; Milech & Schilo 2004; Hetherington 2010; Krauth 2011;

McNamara 2012; Watkins & Krauth 2016; Brien & McAllister 2016) and my position in it is described in Green & Williams (2018), but the latter can be summarized by saying that the modes and media of scholarly reflection on practice are partly determined by historical and institutional factors which may not always lead to the effective production and dissemination of knowledge. In particular, the forms of supplementary discourse in Creative Writing are partly determined by institutional pressures to ‘legitimise’ practice research in the academy by the adoption of recognized scholarly forms and modes (Duxbury 2007). But such an institutional purpose might stand at odds with the other, more substantial purpose of such discourses: articulating creative practice in ways which help ourselves and other develop and understand practice (Hann 2015).

In other words, reflection is a prior, chaotic, perhaps partly non-verbal activity which richly supports the production of creative work, but which is represented after the fact in a tidy scholarly form... The representation of reflection in written form after the fact may therefore misrepresent or falsify the practice element of the research by eliding some elements or features of reflection (intuition, non-verbal features, inchoateness) even as it imposes or emphasises others (the scholarly apparatus which is supposed to underpin the work’s status as research). But rather than talking about misrepresentation, we would like to talk about distortion – the likelihood that ‘writing up’ reflection on practice into the classic scholarly article is likely to distort practice, like a strangely shaped mirror in a hall of mirrors, making some areas of the body bulge and others thin to almost nothing. (Green & Williams 2018)

While the traditional scholarly article will and should remain a central form for Creative Writing’s supplementary discourses, this article presents one way in which reflection on creative practice might begin ‘to think expansively or differently about our scholarly

practices’ (Rendle-Short 2015: 91). It does so in the belief that ‘recognition of a wider range of modes and media for supplementary discourses would allow the generation of new and different knowledge about creative practice, and make that knowledge differently available to researchers’ (Green & Williams 2018). It also takes up the challenge posed by Francesca Rendle-Short for writers of supplementary discourses in *Creative Writing*: ‘We must ask questions about whether or not the form we are adopting for our purposes is the best kind of vehicle to do the job about what it is we want to say’ (2015: 93). In trying to answer those questions it stands alongside a number of similar projects, including Rendle-Short’s own use of nonfiction techniques, Eugen Bacon’s conception of the exegesis [1] as memoir (2017) and Nigel Krauth’s as preface (2002), and David Carlin’s use of a dramatic form to record the history of the Red Shed Theatre Company (quoted in Rendle-Short 2015: 96-7). These examples realise what Paul Williams calls ‘the myriad possibilities of the form’ of exegeses and other reflections on practice (2016: 15).

Challenging the authority of the scholarly article may be particularly valuable for practitioners whose own practice, however expert, might be characterized by hesitation, guesswork, equivocation, prejudice and worry. In this sense, simply adopting an unconventional form for critical reflection on practice might be a useful exercise in dismantling the sometimes misleading air of authority which the voice of the scholarly article can construct in creative disciplines (see Nelson 2013: 35). But Rendle-Short also suggests – and I believe – that the medium and methods of reflection also have the potential to shape the way we reflect. She argues that nonfiction techniques including ‘montage, juxtaposition, toggling, fragmentation, white space, etymological exegesis’ (2015: 95) might be productive devices for writing about writing practice. Thinking about writing might involve a rhetoric wider than that of the scholarly article, and so in order to represent that thinking (in order to provide a space in which that thinking can be inscribed), we might need to open the

supplementary discourse to new forms and media. In this way ‘an essay [...] can enact content through form’ (2015: 93).

I do not mean to imply that the scholarly article is a narrow vessel for thinking about creative practice. Like all literary forms, it is more remarkable for its ongoing capacity to amaze than for its limitations. But the very apparatus it uses to construct its rigour and authority might sometimes misrepresent the state of ‘uncertainty’ or ‘half-knowing’ which can be important to writing practice (McNamara 2012). The scholarly article may not in fact be ‘sufficient’ for articulating knowledge in the creative disciplines (Nimkulrat et al 2016: 5). It is a propositional form, and thus in articulating knowledge it is likely to promote propositional knowledge and elide or attenuate non-propositional knowledge. Where its subject is creative practice, whose domain is, by definition, *knowledge-how* as much as *knowledge-that*, the scholarly article is at a disadvantage: rather than *inscribing* knowledge, it can only *describe* it. It is this conceptual removal, the act of description by which practice is translated into the milieu of the scholarly article, which elides (some of) the non-propositional thinking which as researcher-practitioners we might like to make or keep visible in our accounts of practice and thinking about practice: ‘[T]he transition from practice to theory cannot always be made [due to] a limitation of language’ (Michael Biggs quoted in Nimkulrat et al 2016: 5; see also Skains 2018: 89). Adopting non-propositional or more-than-propositional forms can be a way of retaining or respecting those facets of practical knowledge which the written form elides. In the case of the filmed conversation, for example, filming can preserve the ‘social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc’ which such a face-to-face encounter can generate in addition to the ‘verbal answer’ (Opdenakker 2006). More specifically, filming a reflective conversation represents an attempt to inscribe ‘the affective element in practice (what it is really like to write [or, what it is really like to talk about creative practice])’ (Green & Williams 2018). It is intended to address the difficulty of investigating creativity ‘as it



takes place in naturalistic settings’ (Ernest A. Edmonds, et al. quoted in Skains 2018: 87). As I shall note below, however, that this aim might partly frustrated by the film’s production values and process, which construct their naturalistic representation in a rather studied way.

There is of course a long and varied tradition of (filmed) interviews with writers. Meanwhile the conversational interview is an established research method, particularly in the social sciences (Roulston 2012; MacRobert 2013: 58-63). I would differentiate our approach as a more or less symmetrical exchange between practitioners (akin to Watkins & Krauth 2016) rather than an asymmetrical interviewer–participant dynamic. Nevertheless our conversation realized some of the features of the conversational interview: it was semi-structured, for example, and promoted values of ‘sociability, reciprocity, and symmetry’ as opposed to the ‘hierarchical’ approach of more structured modes (Roulston 2012).

### **Conversation as mode, film as medium**

The starting point then for our approach was on the one hand a sense of what form might be fitting to the subject matter, and on the other a concern that ‘discipline-generated packaging may ... stifle the voice (or experimental mode of expression) a researcher might seek in order to convey a legitimately innovative discovery’ (Watkins & Krauth 2016). If discoveries about practice are fragile, then it becomes imperative to find a way of expressing them that distorts them as little as possible, a ‘manageable capture of the contextual experience’ of reflection (Bacon 2017). Where reflection takes place in a live setting, capturing its nuances may require an approach to documentation similar to that required for documenting the ephemeral performances typical to certain other artistic disciplines, and subject to similar difficulties (Nelson 2013: 26, 83-86).

It is clear of course that there would always be some distortion: there would be no transparent and neutral way of recording our reflections. Firstly, this was a record in large part of conversations which we had already had (and, pub conversations being what they are, had already had several times over). We were not so much recording live reflections as they occurred as rehearsing and recording conversations which had happened previously, even if, in the details, we were finding new words and new variations on what we'd said before. In that sense we were self-consciously reiterating previous conversations. However, this was reiteration rather than dogged recreation: the conversation as filmed was not scripted. We had a list of topics we'd probably try to cover, but as it happened we just tried to talk as normal and that gave us our footage. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the film stages its conversation, and perhaps in ensuring that we covered certain topics we also limited the potential for the conversation to reach its chaotic, tangential potential. Second, filming in a busy pub would have caused technical problems for the filming: it would have put constraints on the space we could use to set up cameras in, and it would have meant high noise levels, not to mention the likelihood of people interrupting us. So Alan approached the landlord of our local, the Tanners Arms in Alnwick, Northumberland, and he generously agreed to let us in two hours before opening time one day, so that we could film in an empty, quiet pub. In the end, that two hours of footage was boiled down to a fifteen-minute film.

For all these reasons, it would be a lie to claim that the film was an authentic record of our reflective conversations: the conversation was a rehash, the setting was partly faked, and the final edit misrepresented the conversation as it took place in favour of a condensed, edited 'highlights package'. But I would still claim that using the medium we did brought with it some important benefits.

First, simply maintaining the dialogic structure of a conversation instead of synthesising a monological authorial voice stayed truer to the way our thinking actually happened, not only

in being a conversation but also in allowing for misunderstandings, false starts, interruptions, and disagreements. These phenomena may often constitute the most useful moments in conversations about practice, since they can represent the moments when our practice and insights outstrip our ability to articulate them. ‘Mistakes are expected, they become an essential element of the creative drift. Imaginative thinking, creative solutions, surmise and anticipation come out of playing (Rendle-Short 2015: 92). Nevertheless mistakes and other hiccups are typically edited out of critical-reflective essays as irrelevant, embarrassing or unnecessary.

Second, filming and screening the conversation rather than typing up a transcript (or worse, reconstructing it from notes) allowed a much richer set of non-verbal cues to inflect it. I’m talking here about body language – nodding, frowns, facial expressions – as well as nuances of conversation that would be silently lost in written form: hesitations, tone of voice, amusement, and so on. All of these are easily picked up by interlocutor or audience in a live situation or (to a lesser extent) on film, and all help to position, emphasise, soften or spin the semantic content of the words more precisely. Teachers know that feedback given face-to-face can operate differently (not better but *differently*) from that given by email or print: non-verbal cues and the social context can help the tutee variously to understand, misunderstand, interpret or indeed ignore it. It should not be a surprise if the same is true of our reflections on practice. Capturing those non-verbal elements as far as possible seemed worth attempting.

Third, it seems to me that as well as stripping out those communicative nuances, the conventional critical-reflective essay strips out the manner of our reflection on practice. Academic rigour carries with it the notion of rationality and judiciousness. For example, we’re not supposed to make a claim which we can’t back up with evidence. I would not want to undermine that principle. And yet researchers may also operate through hunches, guesswork, flippancy and ignorance, especially in practice research, where our advances can

often spring from insights part- or malformed, from outrageous assertions which we wouldn't want to defend in print, and other irrational or injudicious moves. For example, during the conversation we discuss the possibility of 'film porn poems', and in live conversation, with associated non-verbal cues, it is apparent (I think) that this is not meant literally but as a mischievous shorthand for various tones and artistic traditions (most obviously the satire of Rochester and Restoration excess) which the film-poem could draw on. The notion of versified porn, in particular, seemed in its very appallingness to offer creative possibilities, even if I didn't yet know (and still don't) how they would be realized in practice. It is vital for practitioners to feel able to pursue such hunches in spite of (and perhaps because of) their seeming wrong, injudicious or simply foolish. Maintaining as far as possible the 'live' nature of a reflective conversation seems to me a sound way of respecting the role of injudiciousness in our creative development, of haphazardness and guesswork, intuition and saying something stupid as a valuable step on the way to making good art. But it is important also to note that perhaps this conversation didn't so much maintain its 'live' nature as stage or re-stage it. The conversation was semi-structured and rehearsed previous conversations we had had; and though within the space created it was live and spontaneous, the later editing process in effect represented it to the viewer. Early audiences noted the studied feel of the film (e.g. Bonta 2015), and in future I might be ready to go further in pursuing a more diligent documentary process, and letting loose ends of all kinds remain.

Those are some of the benefits of our approach. Of course there are also disadvantages, and I would want to be very clear that I think they are real losses. By choosing to reflect in the conversational mode and to publish that reflection in the medium of film, we chose to forego the precisely articulated argument, critically contextualised and supported by fully referenced evidence, that the conventional article is structured to produce. Even if we gain in nuance and

fidelity to the ways practitioners do often reflect, we lose much of the scholarly apparatus which is taken to underwrite academic rigour.

For example, it is much harder (and we didn't attempt) to give comprehensive references in a filmed conversation. We could have given full bibliographic details of the texts we mentioned through subtitles, but we decided that this was a spurious kind of referencing because no one would actually use the film in that way. (In the film we refer to and/or quote films such as *Night Mail* (1936), Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002) and Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (1975), as well as Tony Harrison's film poetry (2007) and Weinberg's *Autumn Fire* (1931). This article gives bibliographic details below, and in this sense is more rigorous than the film; but the film I hope makes more productive use of these texts.) Aside from the technical challenge of giving adequate referencing, we had to decide whether to interpolate critical evidence after the fact, as part of the editing process. One of the values of the conversation as a mode is its scale and speed, the way it is able to range over large areas of ground, seeking connections, turning quickly from one idea to the next. As a consequence, it is less able in the moment of its performance to cite and marshal critical materials than a conventional essay can, partly because we don't in conversation tend to have all those texts to hand and partly because even if we did, using them would make for a strangely laborious conversation. For example, during the film Alan and I discuss the high-art connotations of the terms film and poetry in contrast to video and verse, and the assumptions they encode about the form and content of the film-poem. Here we could have found a way to cite James Peterson on filmmakers' use of the term poem to suggest an analogy between the avant-garde short film and a certain notion of the lyric poem derived from the Romantic tradition (1994: 29). Such a citation would have provided critical evidence to support the reflective insight generated in conversation. But it would also have falsified the film's account of our thinking about practice: neither Alan nor I had Peterson in mind at the time, nor indeed had we formulated and contextualised the

argument as precisely as he does. Our misgivings about the term were not generated by critical reading but by our own haphazard consumption and practice, and rather than constructing an argument bolstered after the fact by critical evidence, we wanted to offer such misgivings and observations in the moments they were generated through risky and opinionated chatter, in fidelity to the conditions under which practitioners do often reflect on practice.

Similarly, conversations aren't essays, and the conversation we had simply didn't have the argumentative power, pace and concentration that a good essay should have. We talked round topics, we hit on a few interesting points, each strung together more or less loosely with the last; that's how conversations work, and, it's my thesis here, it's how some important reflections on creative practice come about – by the slightly chaotic and sometimes alcohol-impaired process of two people talking. Sometimes of course our reflections do take a more closely-argued, analytic form, but when they don't, when they're more like relaxed and interested conversations, we shouldn't be surprised if they don't measure up to that particular index of academic rigour. I suspect that minute-for-minute, watching the film yields up less propositional knowledge about filmpoetry than a conventional scholarly article, but that, on the other hand, it gives a better picture of how it is that practitioners actually go about discussing their practice.

The specific mode of the reflection also produced a peculiar constraint. The fact that we were drinking beer probably affected the manner and content of our conversation both culturally and physiologically. I think the viewer can track the way the conversation becomes looser and more animated as it goes on, breaches of continuity notwithstanding. The sobriety of rigorous critical discourse is, literally, compromised. Again, this is a real shortcoming: in my own practice I prefer to write sober, edit sober, rather than letting alcohol anywhere near the process. But whether that prohibition should apply to conversations about practice, I'm not so

sure; thinking and talking about practice is hard, and I sometimes value having my tongue loosened. Again, the conventions of rigour need setting against a more mysterious set of values which express the effectiveness and usefulness of open, speedy, tangential, animated conversation.

Those are some of the gains and losses which I think we made by choosing the medium of the filmed conversation. Now I move on to describing and reflecting on the process of making the film, and relating that to the process of writing a more conventional scholarly article.

### **Filming conversation: the production process**

The filming process yielded about two hours of footage. Alan and I then spent a total of about three days editing that footage. During that editing stage I began to see how the process of making the film echoed the process of producing a scholarly article. There was the research process proper, gathering material (our footage, but also clips from other films), and then there was the long and difficult process of selecting material and stitching elements together to make a coherent argument or narrative. The similarity was sustained and striking. For example, sometimes we had to lose things that we really liked, because they didn't fit in the argument we were constructing – a familiar experience to anyone constructing a scholarly article. More fundamentally, it wasn't just a case of finding the pieces of footage that said what we wanted them to say, and then stitching them together so that they added up into a preconceived argument. To a surprising extent, we were discovering what we wanted to say as we edited. As parts of the conversation that had been far apart were placed next to each other, they began to connect and make sense in unexpected ways, so that the argument as it emerges through the film is more than and different from the arguments we were actually making during filming. (The differences are ones of nuance and degree, of course.) This

seems to me to mirror the process of writing a scholarly article, where we sit down with materials to hand and an idea of the argument, but see that argument sharpened and shaped by the editorial/authorial process of putting those materials together in good order. But this also of course undermines my claim that filming a conversation gives a more direct or authentic account of how we reflect on practice – that may be so, but it's still an account which is shaped and distorted (and perhaps improved) through a post-hoc editorial process.

It is possible to see other parallels with the essay form. We quote from other texts, using clips from other films. We divide the film up into sections (paragraphs), and use signposting, in this case audiovisual, to help the reader navigate the text. That's an example of a more general point, that the film, like an essay, clearly has a rhetoric which it uses to position itself. Sometimes that rhetoric is factitious. You may notice that the levels of our drinks don't go down consistently. And the sounds of a busy pub you hear at various points were recorded later (we filmed in an empty and silent pub, remember), but it played a crucial role in staging the text as a conversation – in convincing the viewer that this patchwork of filmed snippets was a faithful record of a single sustained conversation. More and more as the editing process went on, I realised that while the film might sustain one claim about being an authentic record of reflection (it documents directly a live conversation that was really had), it is nevertheless as artificial and staged as the scholarly article in the way it presents that reflection.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that any representation of creative practice, any mode or medium for reflection on practice, will involve distortions. There is no neutral medium for reflections to take place in. But different forms, different media, provide different distortions of our thinking about



practice and thus can usefully complement each other, providing a multi-perspectival picture of how writing can or might happen. All of them have advantages and disadvantages, or perhaps I should say they offer different realisations of the notion of ‘rigour’, some of them valorising textual analysis, bibliographic data and argumentative sophistication, and others valorising fidelity to the business of reflection as it happens, or a commitment to documenting the non-verbal nuances and context of writing and reflecting, or its dialogic dimension.

Often the scholarly article and more unconventional modes and media might yield similar knowledges. It would be surprising if this were not the case. But the way the knowledge is inscribed might inflect it with different nuances, and might guide other practitioners in different ways. For example, in their excellent article ‘Surface Tensions: Framing the Flow of a Poetry-Film Collaboration’, Philip Gross and Wyn Mason describe the process of collaborating on a film-poem, and in passing they argue that the ‘aim of poetry-film [...] is to produce film where word and image form a symbiotic relationship, so that the end result is more than the sum of its parts’ (2013: 324), a point Alan and I explore at some length in ‘Terra Incognita’. Their formulation is more succinct than ours, ours is more discursive and expressive than theirs. I think there is room for both kinds of reflection and both ways of documenting reflection.

I must confess that it is slightly embarrassing for me to watch ‘Terra Incognita.’. Partly that’s just because none of us like seeing or hearing recordings of ourselves, but it’s also partly that I’m struck by how gauche and inarticulate I appear in it. Yet this may tell us more about the scholarly article, how its construction of authority is part of the armour that the practice-researcher puts on when working in the academy. In print, our reflections tend to position our practice not only as intellectually sophisticated but also as assertive and definite in taking the positions we argue for. Yet the reality of our reflection on practice may often stumble some

way behind the practice itself. The kind of inarticulate umming and ahing on display in the film might represent reflection better than the tidied-up, sanitised account we usually present. Other practitioners, and particularly students and novice practitioners reading around in the discipline to help develop their practice, might well benefit from seeing this reality alongside tidied-up accounts, or they risk being misled about how practitioners really operate.

## Endnotes

[1] Exegesis is the preferred term for the supplementary discourses in the Australian Creative Writing PhD; much of the debate about expanding the forms of these discourses has focused on doctoral research but applies *mutatis mutandis* to the work of established researchers. Whether it is ethical that doctoral students should be shouldering a substantial burden of risk in developing the discipline is up for debate.

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